

Northbrook, IL - This morning U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Highland Park) joined students, alumni and teachers to present a \$200,000 grant to the International Center of Deafness and Arts (ICODA) in Northbrook. The grant will be used to develop a teacher-of-the-deaf training program through a partnership between Oakton Community College, Illinois State University and ICODEA.

Dr. Patricia Scherer, Executive Director and Founder of ICODEA, welcomed Congressman Kirk along with Dr. Margaret Lee, President, Oakton Community College, Ed Mason, Director of Services for Illinois State University and Gina LoVerde, a graduate of ICODEA and Director of ICODEA's Outreach Program, for the announcement event.

"I commend Dr. Scherer for her dedication to helping the deaf and hard of hearing," said Congressman Kirk. "This \$200,000 grant will allow Dr. Scherer and her team to develop a special teacher training program in partnership with Oakton Community College and Illinois State University. The International Center of Deafness and Awareness has been very successful in providing students with the skills and self-confidence needed to enter the workplace. Our federal grant will help ICODEA expand its work and touch the lives of many children. We are fortunate that this renowned center is part of our community."

Dr. Patricia Scherer established ICODEA in 1997 to focus solely on the arts. Scherer, who also founded the Center of Deafness 32 years ago, saw ICODEA as an expansion of arts programs like the Center Light Theatre and the International Creative Arts Festival. Over the last two decades these programs developed a different mission from that of the Center of Deafness – one focused on integrating arts training into academic and life-skills studies.

Since inception, ICODEA brought the arts to hundreds of deaf and hard of hearing children. Academy Award winner Marlee Maitlin, a graduate of the ICODEA theatre program, said in a recent interview with Chicago Magazine and Pioneer Press, "Every deaf child's parent should bring them to ICODEA. It develops their skills and gives them therapy that builds their self-esteem and gives them the confidence to succeed. If it weren't for Pat Scherer, there would never have been an ICODEA and I would not be where I am today." Maitlin also appears on The West Wing.

Gina LoVerde, a graduate of ICODEA, serves as the organization's Director of Outreach. She

joined ICODA at age seven. “Looking back on my life, I can’t remember a time that didn’t involve ICODA or the ICODA family. As a child, they made me feel self-confident and just like every other kid. I learned skills that will help me all my life. ICODA and I have grown up together, shared the same experience...it’s my extended family. We learn from each other.”

Statistics show ICODA enjoys remarkable results helping children who are deaf and hard of hearing become successful adults. Ninety-nine percent of ICODA alumni are gainfully employed adults compared to a 75 percent unemployment rate among the American deaf community.

“ICODA’s programs are enhancing quality of life for deaf and hearing-impaired children, adults and their families,” said Kirk. “Exposure and participation in the arts builds self-confidence, helping our children lead full and productive lives. Dr. Scherer’s work changed the lives of many in our community. It is exciting to think about how many more children will benefit from the teachers that emerge from this unique training program.”

ICODA, located in Northbrook, is also home to the Center Light Theatre, an Art Gallery, the ICODA Dance Studio and the Children’s Museum on Deafness. Other program graduates include, Emmy Award winners Liz Tannebaum and Jonalee Folerzynski.

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